



Minutes

Montana State Parks & Recreation Board

Travelers' Rest State Park, 6717 Highway 12 W Lolo, MT 59487

Parks Board Members Present: Tom Towe, Chair; Diane Conradi; Jeff Welch; Mary Sexton;
Doug Smith; Sue Daly

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff Present: Roger Semler, Assistant Administrator Parks; Tom Reilly,
Assistant Administrator Parks, Parks Staff

Guests: August 20, 2014- See Parks file folder for sign-in sheet

Topics of Discussion:

1. **Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance**
2. **Approval of Minutes of June Board Meeting**
3. **Approval of Board Expenses**
4. **Approval of 2015 Board Meeting Calendar**
5. **Board Members Report**
6. **Director's Report/Staff Report**
7. **Award Recognition**
8. **Public Comment Not on Agenda**
9. **Budgets HB2 & HB5 and Legislation**
10. **Commercial Use Rule**
11. **Capital: Makoshika Waterline and Facility Condition Inventory (FCI)**
12. **State Parks User Fees**
13. **Snowmobile Grants**

1. Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Towe called meeting to order at 10:45.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of the Park Boards Meeting Minutes of June 18, 2014

Action: Chairman Towe moved and Member Conradi seconded the motion to approve the June 18, 2014 minutes as corrected. Motion carried.

3. Approval of Parks Board Expenses

Action: Member Smith moved and Vice Chair Sexton seconded the motion to approve the Parks Board expenses. Motion Carried.

4. Approval of 2015 Board Meeting Calendar

No comment or change to Parks Board Meeting 2015 Schedule.

5. Board Member Reports – tours, conversations, questions, etc

Chairman Towe reported he visited Placid Lake State Park and Salmon Lake State Park, positive experience, nice facility; camp host at Placid Lake exceptional friendly went out of his way to visit and greet everyone. Spent a day with Doug Habermann Region 5 Regional Park Manager; visited Lake Elmo State Park; Yellowstone River Park not developed, great potential; and Cooney State Park, 80 campgrounds, well kept up and managed. Hell Creek State Park, road conditions are 26 miles of washboard, dealing with County to fix issue; 71 campsites, 1,500 people at campground over 4th of July, 99% of people who visit come to fish.

Vice Chair Sexton visited Tower Rock State Park and Wayfarers State Park. Meeting with new Region 4 Park Manager, John Taillie; talked with Colin Maas about the Smith River State Park & River Corridor Advisory Council, first meeting scheduled for September. In September will attend the Annual Montana Recreational Trails and Parks Association (MRTPA) Conference in Butte, part of a panel discussion.

Member Conradi visited Wild Horse Island State Park; the Flathead Lake islands are remarkable and an underutilized asset. Met with Region 1 park staff; discussed various park challenges, visitor numbers, and law enforcement issues. Plan to schedule time with Gary Wolf, Region 1 FWP Commissioner to visit State Parks in the region.

Member Welch floated the Smith River in July; staff does great job managing the area. Visited Wood Tikchik State Park in Alaska; largest state park in the nation. Biked Hiawatha Trail in Idaho, well managed public private deal; invited by Governor Bullock to travel to China in September on a trade mission.

Member Smith returned to Makoshika State Park two days after the June board meeting with Travel Montana to do travel writing. July visited Craig Putschat at Hell Creek, discussed management issues with the park. In August the local chapter of Native Plant Society did a weed pull at Brush Lake State Park, swam there half dozen times, wonderful lake.

6. Director's/Staff Report

Sue Daly Chief of Administration FWP on behalf of Director Hagener, reported the recent Land Board meeting approved two parks land issues, perpetual recreation easements at Thompson Falls State Park and Lewis & Clark Caverns State Parks. Smith Advisory Council will have their first meeting September 16 at Camp Baker State Park; Vice Chair Sexton will be the Parks Board representative; also revenue in the agency is still a large issue.

Roger Semler Assistant Administrator for Parks Division, on behalf of State Parks Administrator, Chas Van Genderen; personal update new Region 4 Park Manager, John Taillie, Region 3 Park Manager, Matt Marcinek; Jennifer Lawson Marketing and Communication Specialist left State Parks, great appreciation and respect for the work Jennifer did for Montana State Parks Marketing and Communication. Betsy Kirkeby is acting as Marketing and Communication Specialist, will be advertising position in near future. Visitation for month of July 446,000, 7% increase, missing numbers from Salmon Lake and Placid Lake State Park, year

to date 1.26 million up 4% from last year. Upcoming Legislative Session received Directors Office approval to pursue two laws; Island Park Law, affects Wild Horse Island change law to put in boat dock to for better access to the island; Concessionaire Contracts, limited to seven years extend to twenty years; Department of Administration introducing bill. Cultural Resource moved forward with designation of First Peoples Buffalo Jump as a National Historic Landmark (NHL), highest designation; filed trip scheduled for September 12 formal hearing September 13; confident process will designate as a NHL. Secured grant for additional research of Rosebud Battlefield, grant administered through National Park Service (NPS); Makoshika Road Project moved forward Army National Guard doing preliminary work, contractor will start soon; issue with heavy rain, concerned with soil structure might affect work. Smith River Advisory Council first meeting at Camp Baker September 16, 12:00p.m.-4:00p.m.; Council Chair Colin Maas, Vice Chair Sexton represents Parks & Recreation Board, meeting open to the public. Key issue: update to Smith River Biennial Fee Rule.

7. Award Recognition

Plaque given to Regional Park Manager Matt Marcinek, Park Ranger Anne Ore Missouri Headwaters State Park, and Park Ranger Aaron Kind Chief Plenty Coups State Park by Roger Semler in recognition of a life saving incident.

8. Public Comment Not On Agenda

Jean Curtiss Missoula County Commissioner welcomed board to Missoula County; pleased board toured Milltown State Park, only finished part of park is the overlook, rest of the park development is waiting for go ahead to spend money that is already allocated; been involved 14 years with Milltown site: remediation, reclamation and redevelopment; preferred access road is not in public ownership, encourage board to recommend go ahead to develop rest of the park, process has slowed down.

Saara Snow Travel Coordinator Adventure Cycling Association, largest bicycling nonprofit in North America; explained their effort to increase bicycle tourism in Montana. Many environmental, economic and health benefits; cycle tourists spend more money. Recommend to Montana State Parks a no turn away policy and increase hiker biker sites and amenities.

Margaret Gorski Lewis & Clark Trail Heritage Foundation, National Organization headquartered at Lewis & Clark Interpretative Center at Giant Springs State Park. Organization 50 years old, helped create Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail, 2,000 miles in Montana, many significant sites include State Parks; individual sites small part of Lewis & Clark story but together a collection of stories; all sites important for local communities, educational, and national significance. Need for integrated management for recreation within the state; important for Montana State Parks to be a leader; example is interpretative signs located all over Montana.

Bruce Mihelish president of Travelers' Rest Preservation and Heritage Association (TRPHA); gave lesson on interpretation. Discussed their success people, make difference for Travelers' Rest and money. Fundraise \$60,000-\$70,000 a year; money supports part-time

executive director, education and programming, and Montana State Parks. Without TRPHA kids programs, storytelling, interpretive enhancement, and volunteers would stop.

9. Budgets HB2 & HB5 and Legislation

Sue Daly, Chief of Administration FWP, explained Montana statutes delegate authority to Parks Board to review and approve the Park Division's budget prior to submission to the Governor. Statutes also give Parks Board authority to establish policy direction for the agency, which include direction regarding legislative proposals. FWP addressed obligations by reviewing broad fiscal and legislative priorities with the Board early in the executive planning process and present requests for new work and for legislative proposals in July for final approval; no formal public process is undertaken directly related to budget detail or legislative proposals. Parks Board priorities that give direction to the budget detail and proposed legislation are based on our ongoing dialogue with constituents; public also afford opportunity to comment on budget and legislative proposals through the Board meeting process. Parks Board can approve or suggest modifications to Park's budget and legislative proposals. The budget proposals reflect careful balance of revenue projections with need to address agency priorities and Governor's Office direction. This budget reflects FWP's plan to balance expenditures with revenues while sustaining positive fund balances through FY19. Adding proposals to the budget request could reduce the fund balances faster than planned; eliminating any of the proposals could extend the current fund balances further into the future.

Chairman Towe asked Reilly what the 2.7million capital funds are made of.

Reilly explains the 2.766 million is made of two million in highway fuel fund, seven hundred thousand bed tax funds and sixty five thousand boat-in-lieu fund.

Daly discussed the general fund request, Bannack State Park fire alarm system upgrade \$1,500,000 and Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park electrical upgrade \$2,000,000.

Chairman Towe requested Daly to attend October board meeting with an update from the Environmental Quality Council (EQC) actions and final budget numbers.

10. Commercial Use Rule

Roger Semler, Assistant Administrator explained in April 2014 Parks & Recreation Board, in conjunction with the Fish & Wildlife Commission, proposed amendments to the Commercial Use Administrative Rules for all FWP land, including state parks, fishing access sites (FAS) and wildlife management areas (WMA). Proposed amendments include: FAS Permit would only be required at fishing access sites and no longer be required at state parks that provide access to water; Restricted Use Permit would be renamed Commercial Use Permit; new rule would list the causes for suspending or revoking a commercial use permit; permit holder would have to donate all proceeds from an activity or event, minus expenses, to qualify for a fee adjustment. Fish & Wildlife Commission adopted this rule as proposed at their August 7, 2014 meeting. Six public comments: opposition to proposal to exempt individual commercial photographers from rules; support for amending "nonprofit organization," to include all 501(c)

organizations; recommendation to allow agents (guides) to collect fees on behalf of outfitters; support for proposed new rule pertaining to causes for suspending or revoking a permit; recommendation to focus on illegal outfitting & fishing regulations, rather commercial use; recommendation to establish a recreational fee for non-commercial users. FWP recommends that Board, in conjunction with Commission, adopt rule as proposed with one change: Amend New Rule I to remove the term “repeated” from the list of causes for suspending or revoking a permit. This change is recommended by the Enforcement and Parks Divisions, which noted that there may be violations that are egregious enough to warrant a suspension or revocation without repeated occurrences.

Action: Vice Chair Sexton move Member Welch seconded that the Board adopt the commercial use administrative rules as adopted by the Fish & Wildlife Commission on August 7, 2014.

Chairman Towe asked for public comment.

No public comment.

Action on Motion: Motion Carried

11. Capital: Makoshika Waterline and Facility Condition Inventory (FCI)

Tom Reilly, Parks Assistant Administrator explained two requests for separate expenditures of capital funds, Makoshika State Park Waterline and Facility Condition Inventory (FCI). Makoshika State Park campground located just over one mile inside the boundary of the park, does not have a water supply, city water service only extends to the Visitor Center. Purpose is to commit up to \$300,000 in State Parks funding currently within the capital program to this effort working in partnership with the City of Glendive; public process is yet to be completed. FCI project will involve a contract with a private engineer firm to conduct inventory at a select number of park units to document existing conditions, predict future replacement needs, more immediate maintenance priorities, and other physical attributes. Examples include septic systems, roofs, mechanical systems, overall building conditions, comfort stations, and similar infrastructure. It is estimated that \$125,000 will be expended on this effort at approximately 15 park sites statewide; money is existing park funds currently in hand, no legislative action.

Lengthy discussion between Reilly and Chairman Towe on where the money came from.

Chairman Towe asked if a request is in the capital budget for next legislative session.

Reilly responds no it is not, developed after June board meeting in Glendive.

Member Smith moved and Member Conradi seconded to approve the department’s proposal to commit the indicted capital funds to the Makoshika State park waterline project and the Facility Condition Inventory review.

Chairman Towe asked for public comment.

No public comment.

Action on Motion: Motion Carried.

12. State Park User Fees

Roger Semler, Parks Assistant Administrator explained user fees represent approximately 38% of the annual earned revenue needed to support the Montana State Park system. Current user fees were adopted by the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission in December 2012 in the Parks Biennial Fee Rule and are scheduled to expire in December 2014. Parks Division propose an updated Biennial Fee Rule to include the following highlights: 20% increase in fees for camping, electrical service at campsites, non-resident daily entry, non-resident annual entrance pass, Lewis & Clark Caverns tours, cabin rentals, yurts and tipis and use of showers; holders of a non-resident annual entrance pass would be subject to the same camping fees as residents; establish new categories and fees for rustic campsites, wild cave tours and sewage dump stations; establish a sliding fee schedule based on group size for use of meeting rooms, shelters, pavilions, and other facilities, etc.; establish authority to implement "premium" campsite fees. Process is as follows: Parks Board tentative approval, 30 day public comment, analysis of public comment and final document presented at October Board meeting. Parks Division conducted internal staff dialogue regarding potential changes to user fees along with comparability research of recreational user fees in neighboring state park systems, federal public lands and private entities. The survey included an analysis of camping fees, day use/entry fees, lodging, facility, tour and special event fees and also addresses fee differentials (spatial and temporal) and fee discount programs. Parks Division propose an updated Biennial Fee Rule with modest fee increases; user fees provide critical source of revenue to support state park system. Last increase in park user fees occurred in 2010 and was applicable to non-resident camping fees and new camping reservation fees only; last fee increase for residents occurred in 2003.

Member Welch asked if legislation has to approve this.

Semler states no, the legislature does not have to approve.

Member Welch recommends State Parks do not use 20% increase, sounds large, need to use \$3.00; careful on language.

Member Welch asked if \$6.00 covered electrical cost.

Semler explains \$6.00 electrical cost is embedded into electrical campsite, listed as separate service due to statue that gives resident disabled and seniors half off campsites.

Member Smith asked how fees compare to FAS sites.

Semler responds fees are higher; level of service provided is higher.

Chairman Towe asked how it compares to other states.

Semler explains Montana is not the highest, fairly consistent with other states; difficult to compare state to state, overall comparable; private sector has higher fees. No fee increase related to education, groups or children.

Park and Recreation Board propose and agree to increase Lewis & Clark Caverns Winter Candle Light Tours to \$25.00.

Park and Recreation Board propose and agree to increase Non-Resident Annual Pass to \$35.00.

Vice Chair Sexton moves and Member Welch seconded to authorize the Parks Division to seek public comment on the user fees as amended by the board in the 2014 Biennial Fee Rule.

Chairman Towe asked for public comment.

Bert Hopeman Lewis & Clark Caverns Concessionaire recommends to increase fees for Lewis & Clark Caverns winter tours, there is small supply and high demand and to continue special promotions.

Action on Motion: Motion Carried as amended.

13. Snowmobile Program Grooming Grants

Tom Reilly, Parks Assistant Administrator explains Montana's Snowmobile Program provide annual grooming grants to organized Clubs statewide for their winter operational funding. The 27 Club's in the Program groom over 4,000 miles of snowmobile trails during the winter use season. The funds are utilized for fuel, groomer repair, and other expenses over the course of the season. Annually, grooming fund allocation is typically \$385,000 - \$400,000. A public comment period was initiated on July 21st and extended to August 10th. Parks Division recommends awarding the \$388,398 in grooming funds as proposed for the 2014/2015 grooming season.

Member Welch moves and Vice Chair Sexton seconded to concur with the department's approval of the Snowmobile Program grooming grants for the 2014/2015 season.

Chairman Towe asked for public comment.

No public comment.

Action on Motion: Motion Carried.

The next meeting will be held October 15, 2014 at Pictograph State Park, Billings Montana.

Motion for adjournment.

Adjourn at 1:50p.m.

Tom Towe, Parks Board Chairman

Sue Daly, Chief of Administration